

Congresswoman NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ

Representing New York's 12th Congressional District

Ranking Democratic Member, House Small Business Committee



Velázquez Unveils Legislation for HSIs

Congresswoman Velázquez unveiled legislation, the Hispanic Serving Institutions Improvement Act, to provide a steady source of funding to colleges and universities that serve a large number of Hispanic, low-income, first-generation college students, also known as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs).

"With graduation season upon us, we are reminded of the difference a college degree can make," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "As our nation faces the tightest job market in 20 years, it is critical that minorities have access to higher education – a necessity to compete in today's workforce."

Even though Hispanics are the largest and fastest growing minority group in the U.S., they have the lowest levels of education attainment. HSIs attempt to bridge this gap by providing special services, such as counseling and tutoring, to help at-risk students stay in school and complete their education.

HSIs are able to effectively serve Hispanic students through Title V grants provided by the U.S. Department of Education. Title V grants range from \$400,000 to \$600,000 annually, and for many HSIs, which operate on very small budgets, this funding can be the difference between staying open and closing down. Currently, the Title V law prevents a steady flow of funds to HSIs because these grants are awarded for a five-year period followed by a two-year waiting period. The act would eliminate the two-year waiting periods for these grants.

"Because funding has increased and the majority of eligible institutions are being served, this wait-out period is unnecessary," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "By making this small change, we would make a big difference in helping HSIs achieve their mission – to provide more Hispanics with the opportunity to earn college degrees."

Between 1999 and 2002, \$4.6 million in funding was provided to HSIs in New York City.

\$375,000 to Woodhull Medical Center

Congresswoman Velázquez presented \$375,000 in federal funding to Woodhull Medical and Mental Health Center. Velázquez successfully secured this funding for the establishment of a community-based asthma management program. Asthma is a prevalent concern in New York City, especially among children, who are three times as likely to be hospitalized for asthma as children in the United States as a whole.

"Based on Woodhull's achievements and the center's positive impact that it has in our community, I am extremely confident this new asthma-management program will undoubtedly be a success," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "Woodhull's work to address the effects of this disease and to provide outlets for treatment and prevention, is not only extremely necessary, but it also contributes to the overall health of many families who live here."

The program will apply a family-centered case management approach to the issue of asthma in the area of North Brooklyn. Each family will be provided with a point person to assist them in overcoming barriers to asthma care.

Woodhull Medical and Mental Health Center is dedicated to addressing the health care needs that are most important to local residents. The center provides care at 15 different sites located throughout Brooklyn.



Medical Director of Woodhull, Dr. Edward Fishkin, Congresswoman Velázquez, Executive Director of Woodhull, Linda Curtis, and President of NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation, Dr. Benjamin K. Chu at the ceremony.

Velázquez Requests Study on Disaster Loans

Congresswoman Velázquez has requested the U.S. General Accounting Office perform a study on whether or not all small businesses that could have benefitted from a SBA Disaster Assistance Program loan following the September 11 attacks, received one.

"The Small Business Administration's (SBA) Disaster Assistance Program served a vital role in responding to the victims of September 11, but many of these loans were not successful," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "We are hoping to find a way to effectively broaden the reach of SBA's Disaster Assistance Program to respond to future terrorist attacks and natural disasters. By requesting that GAO conduct this study, we hope to successfully secure future loans to small businesses that have been faced with challenges

resulting from disaster."

Congresswoman Velázquez intends to use the results of the GAO study as the basis for a legislative proposal aimed at expanding and improving the Disaster Assistance Program. Through this proposal, the program's scope would be widened, barriers would be removed that would prevent potential borrowers from receiving program assistance, and would enable the federal government to be more capable of responding during future disasters.

Following the 9/11 attacks, Congresswoman Velázquez introduced H.R. 3011, the Small Business Emergency Relief Act (SBERA). SBERA would provide low interest and no-cost loans, payment grace periods, forgiveness of existing SBA loans, and grants, but it was blocked by the Republican leadership.

Velázquez Co-Hosts “Paying for College”

Free workshop for college-bound students

Congresswoman Velázquez co-hosted a free financial aid workshop, entitled, “*Paying for College*,” along with the Sallie Mae Fund.

“Many families and students are looking for ways to lessen the financial burden of paying for higher education,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “I want to ensure that college-bound students know that financial assistance is available to them as they reach for their dreams of pursuing a college education. This workshop poses as an excellent opportunity to educate attendees about available loan programs and financial aid.”

The workshop provided college-bound students and their families with an opportunity to learn about applying for admissions and financial aid, understanding financial awards, borrowing for college, and the differences in federal student loan programs. Attendees were given free resources about the college financial aid process and a \$500 scholarship was awarded to an attendee towards the cost of higher education.



Congresswoman Velázquez speaks at the “Paying for College” Workshop.

Brooklyn Chamber Meets in D.C.

Velázquez hosts legislative summit for Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce

Members of the Brooklyn business community were able to discuss local economic needs during the annual legislative summit hosted by Congresswoman Velázquez in Washington, D.C.

“Small businesses are the backbone of New York City’s economy, but they face many challenges, given the current business climate,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “Today’s event gave me the opportunity to listen to the concerns of chamber members, answer their questions, and discuss what changes we can make together to foster economic growth in our communities.”

During the summit, Congresswoman Velázquez discussed how the cost of President Bush’s tax plan will mean the elimination of – and deep cuts to – many federal small business programs, her legislative agenda for the 108th Congress, and her work as Ranking Member of the House Small Business Committee.

Congresswoman Velázquez also pointed to small business legislation she will introduce this Congress. She will be pushing bills to make health care more affordable for small businesses, provide New York City small businesses with more federal contracting opportunities, reduce the federal paperwork burden on small firms, and include small businesses in the remediation and reuse of Brownfields sites.

Congresswoman Velázquez meets with members of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce annually to



Brooklyn Chamber president Kenneth Adams and Congresswoman Velázquez speak at the summit.

discuss economic development and other local issues for Brooklyn.

Grants Awarded to Our Community

Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)

BVM Help of Christians School	\$14,940.67
<i>For Internet access and telcom services</i>	
St. Sebastian School	\$5,317.26
<i>For Internet access and telcom services</i>	
St. Anthony School - St. Alphonsus	\$1,808.13
<i>For Internet access and telcom services</i>	
St. Teresa School	\$5,282.98
<i>For Internet access and telcom services</i>	

Department of Education

New York State Dept.	\$915,679
New York Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped	\$1,734,627
New York Office of Vocational Rehabilitation	\$1,907,518
New York Office of Children and Family Services	\$537,752
New York State Education Department	\$51,090
New York State Commission on Quality of Care for Mentally Disabled	\$933,103

National Endowment for the Arts

El Puente de Williamsburg, Inc.	\$20,000
Ringside Inc.	\$40,000